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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

ASA'S GOOD REIGN.

August 22, 1915. 2 Chron. 15:1-15.

Golden Text: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to thee." James 4:8.

Shorter Catechism.

Q. 61. What's forbidden in the fourth commandment?

A. The fourth commandment forbiddeth the omission, or careless performance, of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments and recreations.

Outline of Lesson.

A prophet's promise and warning. God's reasons shown for both from history.

Asa's determination and putting away of idols.

A gathering of the best people from all the tribes.

A great offering to the Lord and a new covenant made.

The new determination to serve God ratified by a solemn oath.

Lesson Study.

The Connection: Rehoboam reigned in the kingdom of Judah for seventeen years. Abijam followed him, reigning three years. Then came Asa, Rehoboam's grandson, a very young man. Constant struggle went on between the two kingdoms until, in Abijam's short reign, a decisive battle was fought, and victory was on the side of Judah, though its army was only half as large as Israel's. After this peace obtained for a long time between the two kingdoms. Thus was made possible an internal development and consolidation.

A Revival: But, better still, in Judah this quiet afforded an opportunity for a religious revival. This was the special feature of Asa's reign. Such revival periods appeared now and then in the kingdom of Judah. These were very important periods in the national history. They were the means of sustaining the faith and worship of the people to a large extent. But for them all would have been decadence and idolatry.

Prophets Helping: In the study of Asa's career, the presence of prophets must not be forgotten. Azariah and Oded and Hanani uttered strong and true words for God. Prophets were not necessarily predictors. They were forthtellers rather than foretellers. They were God's spokesmen. God left not Himself without witnesses in even the most evil days. When the kings and people obeyed these prophets they prospered.

An Opportune Moment: Asa, the young king, had just returned from a victorious campaign against Zerah, the Ethiopian ruler of the Egyptians, who had invaded the land after it had been at peace and engaged in reforms for ten years. Azariah the prophet met him and stirred his soul anew with hope, encouraging him by what the Lord had already accomplished by him, and urging him to continue to seek the Lord. It was a good time to speak them, and Asa's heart and hands were greatly strengthened.

With You While Ye Be With Him: God's presence is insured by the desire for it. Their consciousness of need of Him and their going to Him made certain His coming to them.

If Ye Seek Him, He Will Be Found: He may for a time hide Himself, that our longing may be the more ardent,

and to be a means of developing our sense of need. He will always be found if He be sought.

If Ye Forsake Him, He Will Forsake You: Our hearts must not be inconstant, our devotion variable. "Be ye steadfast, immovable." Once with God we should ever be with Him. If we are faithless and forsake Him, He cannot abide with us. We need not expect it.

The People Included: The prophet was careful to include the people in his address. "Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin." The ruler has much power, but he must have a people to rule. The nation must have character and principles no less than its ruler. Unless they respond to the same calls of duty to which he responds, he can do but little. So here, Asa's happy experience in revival was shared in by the people. It was because they seconded his efforts that the latter were successful.

Past History: The prophet reminded them of the fact that when in the past they were without God and priest and law, and in their trouble turned to the Lord and sought Him, He was found of them; that when there was no peace but great vexations were upon all, and nation destroyed nation, and city destroyed city, God preserved His people and vexed others with all adversity. What He had done He could and would do again if they would seek Him. God's past dealings with us are a pledge of what He has in store.

Be Strong: In the light of the arguments which he used and of the experiences of the past, the prophet closed his address with the stirring words, "Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded." God's people have a right to be encouraged.

The Effect Upon Asa: Asa had done much already in his pious reform, but the words of Azariah, reinforced by the prophecy of Oded, filled him with new courage and determination. He proceeded to put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities of the kingdom of Israel that had been taken, and he renewed the altar of the Lord that was before the porch of the Lord. Everybody seemed to take part in the cleansing of the land. And well they might. For under the toleration of Solomon and the grosser conduct of Rehoboam, heathen altars had been erected on many hilltops and in their groves. A revival equal to a revolution was among them.

Strangers With Them: By this phase was meant the great number of true people of God who, unable to stand the defection and gross idolatry of the northern kingdom, came out of Ephraim and Manasseh and Simeon, as well as other tribes, to take up their abode with the better people, and to practice the purer religion of the southern kingdom. This class of people had the courage of their convictions and conformed their home and their conduct to the faith.

A Gathering and An Offering: Thus by Asa's fifteenth year it was practicable to have a great mass meeting of the people from every quarter, to present to God a huge burnt offering, and to make a solemn vow and covenant "to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul." Encouraging one another, they made this solemn engagement to the Lord and to one another.

A Drastic Order: They also ordained that whosoever would not take part with them in seeking the Lord, whether great or small, man or woman, should be put to death. How far this order was carried out is not shown. The making of it showed their vehemence.

(Continued on page 11)

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIETIES

SOUND BELIEF.

Topic for Sunday, August 22: A BASIS OF SOUND BELIEF: WHY AND HOW TO GET IT. 1 Peter 3:13-16.

Daily Readings.

Monday: The reason why. John 17:1-3.

Tuesday: The good of it. 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

Wednesday: The Bible. Revelation 22:14-21.

Thursday: Christ's teaching. John 12:44-50.

Friday: By meditation. 1 Timothy 4:12-16.

Saturday: By spiritual growth. 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

"To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

"The word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him."

The age in which we live is impatient of doctrines. It constantly avers that it matters little what we believe just so we do that which is right.

But is one apt to do right who thinks wrong? If one's principles are unsound, or if he have no principles whatever, what are his life and conduct apt to be?

All that a man does comes from within. It is the product of the beliefs and motives which are in his head and heart. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he."

The man who does not believe in honesty is a thief already, and will steal if he can. The man who does not believe in truth will not hesitate to lie when he thinks he will not be caught in it.

The foundations must be sound, or the whole building will be in danger of falling. Sound principles are the foundation on which a substantial Christian structure must be based. It is not surprising that the Bible over and over again emphasizes the importance of sound doctrine.

The world asks of us a reason for the faith that is in us. We should always be able to give it. And the sounder our belief, the more attentively will the world hearken to our testimony. Sound reason that cannot be gainsaid invariably commands attention. Even though it may not like it, the world has to accept it.

There are certain great doctrines that, once firmly established in our minds and hearts, will serve to keep us always within proper limits. They will act as boundary lines, to indicate to us within what limits we may safely move. They are not too numerous to store in our memory.

The trinity of the Godhead; the deity of Christ; the personality of the Spirit; the inerrancy and authority of the Bible; the fact and nature of sin; the justice of God; the virgin birth of Christ; the atoning sacrifice for sin; regeneration by the Spirit; faith and repentance; good works and witness; no second probation; a judgment; eternity of bliss or woe.

With these doctrines, accepted fully and agreed upon by all the great evangelical churches of the world, one may be sure of safety and soundness. They are strong, and they make those who believe them strong. They give vigor and force to all who hold them. They keep the soul close to God, the source and giver of strength.